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Senate passes Garcia's bills to protect citizens from embezzlement

LANSING—Those who have the notion to embezzle from nonprofits, vulnerable adults or citizens over the age of 60—beware. Legislation passed the state Senate today that will increase both fines and prison time for embezzlers, said the sponsor of the bills, Sen. Valde Garcia, R-Howell.

Senate Bills 454 and 455 were written in response to a number of recent embezzlement cases and were designed particularly to increase punishment for those who embezzle \$20,000 or more. Under current law, the punishment for embezzlement does not increase for amounts of \$20,000 or more, leaving inadequate consequences for higher amounts.

Under Garcia's legislation, embezzlement of \$20,000 or greater is a felony and subject to specific prison sentences or fines based on the amount embezzled or three times the value of the money or property embezzled, whichever is greater. SB 454 also enables the conviction of embezzlers on individual charges, which can allow for longer jail times.

The specific prison sentences are as follows:

- Embezzlement of between \$20,000 and \$50,000 is punishable by 10 years in prison.
- Embezzlement of between \$50,000 and \$100,000 is punishable by 15 years in prison.
- Embezzlement of \$100,000 or more is punishable by 15 years in prison.

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